

## Guilt: The portable policeman

We all carry loads of guilt around inside ourselves. The question is how to deal with it.

There are two ways of looking at guilt—it can be both good and bad.

It's good because it keeps us from committing crime, sin, and selfish acts against others. It is the punishing agent of our conscience. If you do, or even think, something against your conscience, guilt will get you.

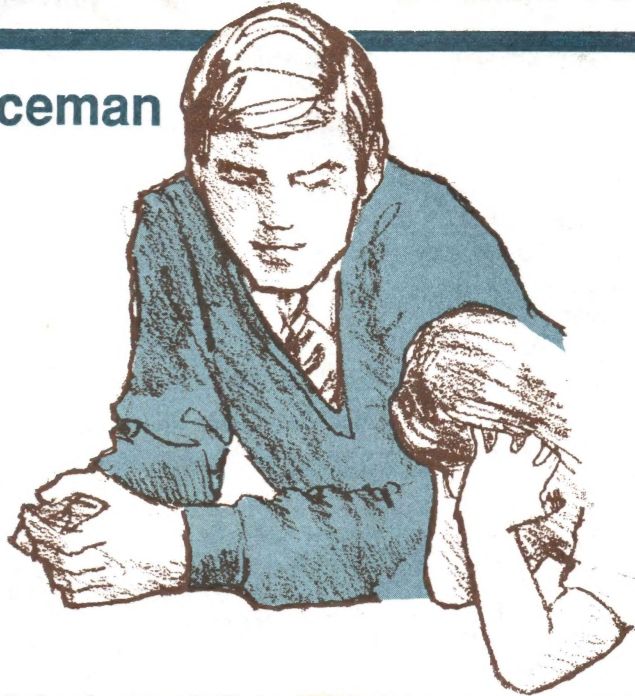
But guilt can be bad. If you overdo it and are too tough on yourself, it can render you helpless, unable to function, miserable and finally depressed. Guilt is good—but like anything else, too much of a good thing turns it bad.

### Why do we feel guilt?

We feel guilty when we do something or even think something that is contrary to our value system. Guilt is how we punish ourselves for breaking our own moral codes.

There are people who don't have moral codes. They rape, steal or kill without feeling guilty. They don't feel they are violating anything. They feel no obligation to society and do not operate by society's moral code.

There are other people with good moral codes who follow them because they like to. It helps them to get along with other people and to work well in society. They might even be called selfish because they follow the rules of society for their own gain.



There are two things the guilty-feeling person is concerned about:

### 1) Fear of punishment (real consequences)

The guilty-feeling person has been punished in the past for violating the moral code. His mother punished him for stealing cookies. His friends ridiculed him for wetting the bed. A policeman gave him a ticket for speeding.

He has never really done anything much more serious in his life, but he knows of criminals who have, and got punished. Also, he might fear punishment in later life, or his religion might have taught him to fear God's wrath.

### 2) Personal feelings of conscience

People carry their own portable policeman, their conscience. Continued on next page...

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science, which can be a very punitive agent indeed. They might have done nothing to society, but be guilt-ridden for even having thoughts which violate the moral code. Or they might have done something like jumping a red light, that they won't be caught for, but they still feel bad.

### **How we develop conscience**

We develop conscience as children, from the approval and disapproval of our parents.

Disapproval produces tension, so the child imitates the parents' behavior and adopts their standards as his or her own. Kids censure themselves to relieve tension without actually being punished. They become their own judge, jury, and jailer.

This portable conscience controls the person's acts in the same way parents (and other controlling people like teachers, policemen and coaches) do.

Why does this happen? Just consider the tremendous amount of correction that almost every child experiences each day of his life until he finishes school or college.

As an infant his parents control his movements almost completely. As he gets to six months of age, parents coax him to roll over, sit up, stand up, hold on, smile, stop crying, hold his spoon, put it down, eat his cereal, and sleep.

In the next year they correct his attempts to walk, to talk, and to regulate his bladder and bowels. Until school age, his parents, uncles, cousins, aunts, sisters, brothers, neighborhood peers and elders correct his play activities.

Then they send him off to school where teachers, principals, guidance counselors and

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## **Controlling your guilt feelings**

What can you do about managing your guilt? Here are some suggestions.

### **1) Trust your realistic moral code.**

Sit down and write out what you believe is right and wrong. Do you owe first loyalties to family or country?

Would you lie to get ahead?

Under what circumstances, if any, are gambling, stealing, non-marital sex and drinking permissible?

You will probably be surprised at the extent and depth of your own philosophy. You might notice that you have changed some of your basic ideas as you grow older. That is good—it shows you are alive and responding to the changes around you.

### **2) Trust your own judgement.**

Trust your own judgement of others, and most especially, trust your own judgement of yourself.

One of the nice by-products of trusting your own judgement is that you are freer to allow other people to trust their judgement of themselves. When others find you trusting them, they usually relax more and accept you more in return. They criticize you less, and thus you have less to feel guilty about.

### **3) Trust your own perception of reality.**

Each of us sees reality in his own way. You might see someone smile and see her as being happy.

Someone else, looking at that same smile, might see it as ridicule. Everyone has his own perception and interpretation of reality.

If you are in doubt about the meaning of something—ask. But in the end, you alone decide what you are going to believe. Trust that and operate on it. If things show you that you have made an error, you will have learned something and you can alter your perception next time.

### **4) Reward yourself for any success you have.**

If you are lucky enough to do something right, and you feel good about it, reward yourself with self-praise or even by giving yourself a present.

Reward is the opposite of punishment. Reward strengthens your self-image, and a strong self-image resists guilt.

### **5) Start new behavior at the lowest rung that you can manage—no matter how low that may be.**

Let's take smoking, for example. Suppose you are smoking two packs a day and want to cut down or stop.

Even if you reduce that 40 cigarettes to 38, you have made progress. Stay there until you feel you can try 36 cigarettes—and don't forget the reward as you go along. Change is difficult; start low and slow.

If you fail at that level—aim again.

### **6) Change situations that cause you to feel guilty.**

Certain situations in our lives cause us to feel guilty, and if we can change them, we avoid guilt.

If you have a dominating friend who always tells you how wrong you are—get him to stop lecturing or avoid him. Change the situation; if you fail to do so after reasonable trying—avoid it.



Continued from previous page... coaches exercise legal control over him.

If he dares to stray from their teachings, they correct him with the power at their disposal: school committeemen, truant officers, judges, psychologists, psychiatrists and treatment centers.

Is it any wonder that he develops a strong conscience?

Let's take sex as an example. A boy learns from his parents and other powerful people when sex can be expressed, where, and which people are appropriate sex choices.

If he dares to express sexual needs under conditions not sanctioned by their sex code, they punish him. If he violates the code, in thought or deed, his own conscience will punish him with guilt.

All this might work pretty well

if the parents were transmitting to the child only their culture's moral code.

The difficulties come when the parents overstate or understate the code.

For example, a parent may say that premarital sex produces horrible consequences, but the girl may learn that some people enjoy sex without any consequences. So now she doesn't know what to do.

Should she feel guilty about such sex; should she feel guilty about disagreeing with her parent; should the parent feel guilty about lying to her?

And how about all the other codes the parent punished her for violating? Is the parent wrong about those, too?

Reality is important in guilt management. The child above saw a reality different from the one she was taught to expect.

If all of us who carry our portable guilt policemen around were to function according to the reality we see rather than the one imposed on us, we could eliminate much of our guilt.

Sure, our perceptions might sometimes be wrong. But if we act according to our own misperceptions, the world will correct us more effectively than if we compound the error by following the misperceptions.

Another method for managing guilt is to reward yourself for doing things well and rewarding each step, no matter how small, toward the desired end.

Guilt is caused by starting too high on the ladder of success, or trying to take steps that are too large.

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## Keeping your valentine happy

By Wallace Denton

The biggest problem couples face is keeping their relationship alive and healthy.

Marriages fall apart in two ways. With some, there's a fanfare and noise and the whole community knows exactly what is happening. The second type is common in most marriages—the marriage gradually withers away while hardly anyone notices—even the couple may not be aware of drifting apart.

I call it the marital dry rot. Marriages suffering from dry rot can break up, but many continue. The partners, while neither unhappy or really happy, merely exist.

Routine can be one factor. It can have an anesthetic effect on a relationship. Taking each other for granted is another common cause.

By consciously working at it,

most couples can keep the marriage relationship alive. Here's how:

- Make time to be together. Studies show that strong families guard their time together.

- Set money aside to accomplish things as a couple. The best things in life are still free, but money sometimes makes it easier.

- Remember a spouse on special occasions with cards, surprises, and other thoughtful things to make him or her feel loved and important.

- Be responsive toward your partner. An engaged couple may hold hands and touch, but people tend to forget to do this once they're married.

- Smile. Research shows that regardless of where you are in the world, anyone can recognize and appreciate a smile.

- Don't forget to touch your spouse often. This is one of the most powerful tools a couple has. A well-timed touch conveys healing, love, sympathy, and other emotions.

- Don't forget to say "I love you." These three words often are forgotten but there's no substitute for them.

- Learn how to affirm and appreciate your partner. Strong families express their appreciation to each other often.

Remember that what goes wrong in a marriage usually is not a cessation of love; it is an accumulation of small unresolved failures.

Marriage is like fine silver—it has a tendency to tarnish. Buff it and make it sparkle and you'll find it easier to keep that "valentine."

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Volume 13, No. 2.*



# Learning to like lunchtime

By Linda Karges-Bone

I know it sounds crazy, but one of the things that I miss most about working outside of the home is lunchtime.

Lunch when you work means an hour of peaceful browsing through a boutique, salad with friends, or even a brown bag with yogurt on a sunny park bench.

Lunchtime at home, with a small child or children, is an entirely different story.

Lunch at home means another mess to clean up, another struggle for the child's attention, another event to plan, more stress. But you can change your attitude and your lunchtime savvy.

For several months, I approached lunchtime with dread and disorganization. My negative attitude was obviously contagious.

My young daughters responded in kind.

Four-year-old Carolyn was finicky and grumpy; eighteen-month-old Audrey whined and made terrible messes on the highchair tray.

I was decidedly annoyed. What was wrong with peanut butter sandwiches or canned pasta every day?

Why couldn't they entertain themselves for a few minutes while I ate my sandwich in peace? What was wrong with my plan? I was home with them. Wasn't that enough?

The answer was no. I had not been giving the meal or the opportunity to be with my children the attention it deserved.

Lunchtime was valuable time and I had been neglecting it. Lunchtime could be fun time, only I had been missing out on the fun.

Lunchtime was important

nutrition time and I had been less than creative with food preparation.

When I started paying a little more attention, lunchtime improved dramatically at our house. Here are some tried and true suggestions and recipes for simple meals that pack a punch of nutrition, learning and enrichment into your child's lunch.



## Simmering soup

Homemade vegetable soup is a fragrant alternative to the boring canned variety.

Early in the morning, prepare this simple soup. In fact, let the children assist you in mixing in the vegetables and barley.

Savor the delicious smells all morning, or leave it safe in a crockpot while you are out doing errands, at nursery school or working part-time.

At lunch, ladle out the soup and settle down to read the wonderful story **Stone Soup**. Kids enjoy this story and it offers excellent opportunities for memory practice. The tale has a list of ingredients to recall.

Make a game out of asking... "What do you put in the soup first, what next?"

## Easy vegetable soup

In large pot mix 1 can tomato juice or mixed vegetable juice, 1 10 ounce bag frozen mixed vegetables, 1 cup barley or brown rice, 1 can beef broth, parsley, black pepper and salt to taste.

Simmer until barley is tender. Sprinkle with croutons and parmesan cheese when serving.

## Pizza party

There's no denying it. Kids love pizza.

Make these mini-pizzas together. Serve with peeled fruit, such as apple slices, grapes or melon balls. While you're eating, read the lively story, **Curious George and the Pizza** by H. L. Rey.

Afterwards, settle the children down for naptime with a quiet activity like drawing pictures of the little monkey on his big pizza adventure.

## Pre-schooler Pizza

Toast whole wheat English muffin or pita bread. Spread with spaghetti sauce (from a jar). Sprinkle with pre-shredded mozzarella cheese.

Broil until cheese bubbles. Be careful with little ones, the cheese needs to cool before they dig in!

## Park It

Part of the fun of eating a meal is sharing it with friends. That means friends for mom as well as the children.

Every few weeks, I meet a good friend with her little ones at a convenient city park.

We tote easy lunches of cheese, crackers, raisins and juice for the children. For us, I like to make a special treat and chat on the bench for an hour. It is almost like "real adult time" again.

## Mom's Tuna Pasta Delight

Cook one pound box of tri-colored pasta until al dente. Rinse  
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and set aside.

Mix one can of waterpacked white tuna, one small can of sliced black olives, one thinly sliced carrot, one can of sliced water chestnuts, one tablespoon of low-calorie salad dressing.

Add pasta. Chill 2 to 3 hours. Pack in a sealed container.

Use large paper cups and plastic utensils for eating.

Add a pack of crackers and a bottle of mineral water and lunch is set.

### Letter time lunch

Use lunch time to review and practice beginning phonics with your pre-schooler. I pull out my plastic "lazy susan." In each tray, place pick-up foods that begin with different letter sounds. Play word games with the kids.

- Can you find a food that starts with the "S" sound?
- Show me a crunchy food that begins like "P."

- Choose a food that sounds like "choo choo."

- I see a vegetable cold and crisp that begins with "C."

- Pick out a food that starts with the same sound as "baby."

Answers:

- Sunflower seeds or salami slices.

- Peanuts or pumpkin seeds.

- Chicken nuggets or cheese cubes.

- Carrot curls or cucumber spears.

- Banana slices or biscuits (with butter).

### Bread and jam

The beloved children's author, Russell Hoban, penned a thoughtful tale called **Bread and Jam for Frances**.

In the story, Frances refuses to eat anything but bread and jam sandwiches.

Of course, the story goes on from that conflict to a happy ending with a lesson to learn! Read this delightful story to your

lunch bunch.

Provide unusual breads such as oatmeal, branola or rye bread. Spread the bread with fresh spreads like apple butter, raspberry jam or grape jelly. Add milk and a mix of peanuts and raisins for protein.

There you have it. Five days of lunch plans to beat the lunchtime stress time.

Use lunchtime for learning, conversation and relaxation. On Saturday, let daddy take the crew out for a burger and you can go shopping, or sleep late or talk on the phone...in peace.

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## Give your child a chance at childhood

By Marion F. Ash

One Sunday, many years ago, my parents and I were visiting with my grandparents.

After lunch I went out into the yard where there was an old apple tree I loved to climb. I promised myself I would be careful with my new trousers—but climb that tree I must.

In the process, I tore one of the trouser legs.

Later when Mother saw what had happened, she gave me a scolding. "Didn't I tell you to be careful with your new trousers? You shouldn't have been climbing trees today."

Grandmother, as usual, came to my rescue. "Now, now," she said, "The trouser leg can be

mended. Remember children will be children. He'll grow up all too soon. Then he won't want to climb apple trees."

What my grandmother really meant was give me a chance at childhood. She believed that children should act like children, think like children, and be loved and understood as children.

But now, too often, children are not called "children" anymore. They're all "pre" something or other. As soon as a baby is ready to get out of the playpen, he becomes a "pre-schooler." By the time he is of school age we call him "pre-teen."

And then when he reaches his teens, and has to cope with

the complex problems of growing up, we still won't let him go his own pace, but tell him he's now "grown up" and should act his age.

Never before have people spent so much time, energy and money in raising children as we do today. There are specialists, teachers, psychologists, pediatricians, guidance counselors who devote their professional lives to the welfare of our children.

Parents try to put in overtime at their jobs so they can make more money to provide their children with better education.

They frantically chauffeur their  
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youngsters from one important event to another—sports, Scout meetings, music lessons, visits to the museum, zoos, beaches, and historical landmarks.

Our children own more toys, cars, boats, radios, books, bicycles, and now computers than any children who ever lived anywhere.

But what these children often don't own is a chance at childhood—the kind of childhood that they choose for themselves.

How can a youngster be a child if the mother or father manipulates his every move?

In no area does parental manipulation with the natural process of growth show up more clearly than in our attitudes toward learning. The mad scramble for fame and fortune begins long before kindergarten. The youngster who has failed to distinguish himself by junior high is just about out of the running.

Is all this "pushing" necessary? As a teacher I have never found any reliable evidence that toddlers who can read words at two are better readers than others by the time they reach junior high.

And neither have I found any valid reason to assume that younger children learn faster, better or more, or that they are more highly motivated, during the early years of their life.

It is true that some children, with parental guidance, are able to read and write at a very early age. But this doesn't mean they are able to make proper evaluation of the things they do, for what they do, many times, is just a conditioned response.

Only when a child has developed the capacity to think, to direct his natural curiosity to find answers to meaningful questions, has true learning for that child been accomplished.

One evening I was visiting

with our next door neighbor. His son had just come home from school, and the father was looking over some of the boy's arithmetic papers.

Suddenly the father looked up at his son. "Ralph," he said, "if you don't start making better grades than this, you'll never get a high paying job."

My neighbor had already placed on his son's shoulders the weight of the adult world—and the boy was only ten years old.



What this father was actually teaching his son was that it isn't what you do that matters: it's what shows; not what you learn, but what grades you get.

He is telling his son you've got to succeed. Get smart. Get on the ball. Forget about the frivolous hours of childhood. Use all your time wisely.

On the other hand, I have a friend who believes children should be children. One day a relative, who believes youngsters should be directed in all their activities, was visiting this friend. The relative stood at the window a few moments, watching the children playing in the backyard. She turned to my friend and asked, "Don't your children do anything but play all day? What benefit do they derive from it?"

Without hesitation my friend

said, "They are learning to encounter life. They are searching for answers to their own vital questions, and they find answers in those make-believe games they play."

Children come to a deeper understanding of themselves and others by pretending to be doctors, nurses, cowboys, or storekeepers.

When a child shares or takes turns with others, recognizes another's frustrations, acts out his own anxieties and conflicts—all in a world of make-believe—he is doing the plain, hard work of growing up through the natural processes of childhood, and without adult supervision.

When we rush our children into clever performance of skills, when we organize their daily lives so that there is not a moment for inner contemplation, we decrease the possibilities for genuine thought and individual growth.

Let's let children be children for the few short years of childhood. Let's let them accumulate precious memories that will serve them well in adult life.

Most of us have happy recollections of our childhood days. When life hurts, when the way grows weary, when we are vexed and baffled by unattainable but deep desires, or saddened by losses, we so many times find solace in remembering something out of our yesterdays.

The truth of this is demonstrated by the hold that songs and poems we learned as children have upon us. These songs and poems appeal to us because their major note touches one of the deeper and elemental things in human nature: childhood.

Marion F. Ash is a retired school teacher and freelance writer who lives in Newton, Illinois. He has had over 500 articles and stories published in leading Christian magazines. He is a widower of two years after forty-eight years of marriage, and has two daughters who are both teachers.



# Research Briefs

Excerpts from child development research

## Study suggests early ear infections affect ability to pay attention

Do children pay later academically for repeated middle ear infections in the first three years of life?

Research has come up with conflicting answers to the persistent theory that early ear infections can affect hearing enough to interrupt the development of speech and language so critical to success in school.

A small comparative study of the IQs and scholastic achievement of 44 socially and economically "disadvantaged" third-graders who had either high, modern or low incidences of otitis media with effusion (OME) before age three did not uncover a significant relationship between frequent bouts of ear infection and academic performance or verbal intelligence.

Some problems did turn up in the area of attentional skills, the University of North Carolina researchers report in *Pediatrics*.

When the children's intelligence, academic achievement and classroom behavior were measured in third grade, and analyzed in conjunction with their histories of middle-ear infection, a link was found in the area of classroom behavior.

The number of days children suffered from OME before age three was significantly correlated with teachers' ratings of their attentional behavior in class. "Children with more otitis media with effusion tended to be described by their teachers as less task-oriented and less able to work independently."

The investigators at Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center note that previous

research has shown that whatever the cause, poor attentional skills in the primary elementary school grades are associated with later problems in academic achievement.

They caution, however, that the children who had experienced the most OME infections "did not have uniformly low ratings of attentional behavior."

In addition, the youngsters' disadvantaged backgrounds "may have made them more vulnerable to attentional and other behavior problems," despite the fact that all had attended a special all-day, 50-weeks-a-year experimental day care program from babyhood.

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## Bath time not best time for shampooing hair

By now most people know that bubble baths can cause vaginitis in little girls.

A Vermont physician reports that bath water containing hair shampoo poses the same hazard.

An informal survey of 55 mothers revealed that most washed their daughter's hair as she sat in the tub.

Dr. J. L. Brown suggests that shampooing be done separately, or that hairwashing take place at the end of the bath and be followed by a fresh-water, all-parts rinse.

He also recommends using only small amounts of an unscented shampoo.

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### The American Baby TV Show

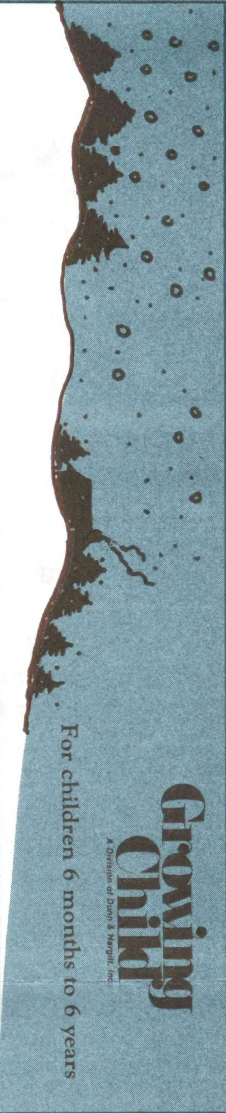












On CBN Cable Network

Mondays	12:30 PM ET	9:30 AM PT
Fridays	12:30 PM ET	9:30 AM PT

*These brief reports are presented to add to readers' general knowledge of research being done in the child development field. Inclusion of an item does not imply that Growing Child recommends or endorses a particular practice, theory, or finding.*



# Fun things to do in February

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						
<b>4</b> Bring some snow inside and watch it melt. 	<b>5</b> Play an imitation game.	<b>6</b> Where are your thumbs? 	<b>7</b> Is there a smoke alarm near the bedrooms in your house?	<b>1</b> Practice saying "please" and "thank you."	<b>2</b> Ground Hog Day. Where is your shadow?	<b>3</b> Do you have any cousins? 
<b>11</b> Wear red today. 	<b>12</b> Lincoln's Birthday. How many pennies have you saved?	<b>13</b> Play Hide-and-Seek (or Find the Button) with a Valentine card.	<b>14</b> Valentine's Day. Whom do you love? 	<b>15</b> What kind of look do you have on your face if you are happy? Sad? 	<b>9</b> Feel the different textures of the winter coats at your house.	<b>10</b> Make heart-shaped cookies. 
<b>18</b> Curl up under a cozy afghan with Mom or Dad--read a story--then take your nap together.	<b>19</b> President's Day. Look for our president's picture--on TV--in a magazine...	<b>20</b> Feel the different curves and lines in your ear.	<b>21</b> Clip clothespins to the side of a plastic bowl. 	<b>16</b> Kiddle hors d'oeuvres: Banana slices topped with honey, peanut butter, apple butter... 	<b>23</b> Look at today's mail. What shapes and colors are the envelopes.	<b>17</b> Invite a friend over to play.
<b>25</b> Visit an elderly friend. 	<b>26</b> Walk or crawl backwards.	<b>27</b> Help set the table for dinner.	<b>28</b> Ash Wednesday.	<b>22</b> Washington's Birthday. Celebrate with some cherry dessert. 	<b>24</b> Visit a museum. 	



## Getting close again

By Linda Karges-Bone, M.ED.

My best friend Kate dropped by for coffee.

We corralled our broods into the backyard and settled into my porch rockers for a chat.

As usual, the conversation steered itself into the three essential topics: Money, "making ends meet," and marriage.

Although our talks often contain some serious ideas and often include a few tears, what Kate told me today was startling.

"I think Chuck has been unfaithful," Kate murmured.

"What!" I exclaimed. "What is going on? Where did all this come from?"

Bit by bit, I learned about the late hours that Chuck has been keeping, the suspicious phone calls, and the classic "lipstick on his shirt collar" kinds of things.

But that wasn't the worst part. Kate told me that her husband had been sleeping on the couch on and off since the baby had been born two years earlier.

"Do you mean he sleeps on the couch every night?" I exclaimed.

"Well, with the three kids and all, someone was always getting in bed with us, or I was so tired, or he got tired of my always being tired...you know we just sort of drifted apart. It was easier that way. I just always figured that we would get closer again, after the kids got up a little ways..." her voice trailed off sadly.

We drank some more coffee. I said all the right things about what a beast her husband was and what a hussy "that woman" was, but inside I felt confused. Their marriage had been quite happy before the children. Chuck and Kate both wanted the children.

What had gone wrong? And when? And what could we all learn from this unhappy couple?

### The problem

After my conversation with Kate, I began to investigate the status of marriage among couples with more than one child under the age of six.

What I found, after talking at length with over 20 couples, disturbed me even further.

Three quarters of the women that I spoke with reported that their marriage was "not very happy" right now.

Some women suspected their husbands of infidelity, but most women simply agreed that "they were not close anymore;" "that they had no time for the marriage;" or that "things just were not the same between them."

Here is a list of some of the situations that I found to be quite common.

• **Problem one:** The parents reported lots of problems with fatigue, especially among the women.

Usually, wives note that they are "too tired for sex." That is probably true.

The bad part is that the wives also insisted that "it is just too

bad for him" if the husband wants sex.

Shelly, a friend who works hard at staying close to her husband, believes that "the ball is really in the woman's court with the sex issue. A lot of women don't want to believe it, but they control the sexual frequency in a marriage."

The bottom line is you must make time for good sex with your husband. It is one sure fire way to stay close.

• **Problem two:** A man needs to feel that his wife is interested in being with him, talking to him, spending time with him.

Cindy, a kindergarten teacher, and her husband, an up and coming naval officer, insist on closing their bedroom

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door when they talk or get dressed for an evening out. "The children know that we are not to be disturbed unless there is an emergency. They have learned that David and I are a couple and that we demand time alone. They respect our status as a couple, not just as mommy and daddy," she says.

Having young, active children involves lots of time and energy. You bake cupcakes, drive to ball practice and Scouts, lead the church children's choir, meet with teachers, and form important relationships with other young parents. That is all well and good. But do not get so involved with your children and your job, be it full-time at home or full-time at the office, that you neglect to be available to your spouse.

Men, especially, need to feel that attention is focused solely on them.

Women, on the other hand, often get reinforced emotionally by "doing everything for everybody." Do not forget your husband when it comes to lavishing attention. Your marriage should get top billing if you want to stay close.

- **Problem three:** Another common problem with parents of two or more young children is the failure to set and keep a regular, early bedtime for the kids.

I spoke with a number of mothers who say that the children "stay up with them" or "fall asleep on the floor." They seem to feel that children have the right to stay up as late as they want.

Other mothers, especially those who work full-time outside the home, purposely keep the children up late in order to spend time with them. That is neither healthy for the children nor for the marriage.

Perhaps the worst scenario involves parents whose children sleep in the bed with them every night. I am not talking about a nursing infant, and I realize that there are people who relish the idea of the "family bed." I am talking about tired, lonely parents who long for time alone together, but cannot stand up to fretful, demanding toddlers and young children.



Amy and Dan set up a lovely nursery for their daughter Kim. But four years later, the crib has not been slept in even once. Instead, the four-year-old nestles between her parents every night.

A consistent bedtime gives young children proper rest, a sense of order, and an understanding that "mommy and daddy have special time together."

- **Problem four:** Part of staying close and intimate includes your status as a couple.

Going out alone on "dates" or attending church, social, cultural or recreational events without your children, builds a sense of intimacy. Yet when I spoke with parents, especially those whose marriages appeared to be most unhappy, I found that they seldom, if ever, left the children to go out alone.

Many couples believed that they "weren't good parents if they ever left the children." There has to be a balance between couple time and family time, if

you want to remain close to your spouse.

- **Problem five:** Children are important, but the spouse cannot be left out. Do not turn into a "mommy" or a "daddy." Remember that you are women and men first of all.

This is not easy to do unless you try very hard to overcome the overwhelming aura of "momminess" and "daddiness." It is easy to slip into habits such as not using one another's first names. Remember to address your spouse by his or her name, or even in affectionate pet names.

Make it a priority to stay close verbally as well as physically, by talking on the phone during the day, or even sending notes and cards to one another. Communication will keep you growing closer. It is good for your marriage and therefore it will be good for your children.

Kate and Chuck are faced with a serious marital conflict. They have drifted apart, far apart.

In their desire to be super parents, to provide an expensive home, to involve their children in all the right activities, they neglected the marriage.

The children that they both hoped for and love have wriggled into an uncomfortable spot between husband and wife. And the marriage suffers.

Children are a great blessing, but so is marriage. Think about putting your spouse in a special, prized position in your life. Watch the relationship rejuvenate. A close, loving marriage can make you close, loving parents.

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# Disposable diapers with less guilt

By Shel Horowitz

Our country's landfills are overflowing with used disposable diapers. Most of them will still be there in 300 years.

Meanwhile, cities and towns across America are running out of places to put their trash.

Every environmentally aware parent faces a tough choice: convenient but unecological throwaway diapers, or time-consuming cloth diapers.

Now, parents have a third option: disposable diapers that largely decompose. Two companies have recently introduced diapers which disintegrate in under a decade, rather than several centuries.

Eco-Matrix, of Brookline, Mass. began marketing Nappies in the U.S. in January after selling for some months in Canada under the name Teddy's Choice.

At \$8.99 for 44 mediums, Nappies are price competitive with Luv's and appear similar in texture and performance.

TenderCare, sold by RMed International, a division of Rocky Mountain Medical Corp. of Tulsa, Okla. is somewhat higher priced, at \$12.49 per package of 44. If Nappies resemble Luv's, TenderCares are closer to Huggies.

Both diapers used Ecostar™, a plastics manufacturing process that introduces starch particles into polyethylene. This creates a plastic which both firms claim is fully biodegradable.

Ecostar™ is designed to decompose in any moist environment, including the inside of a trash bag. Since only the top layer of a landfill is exposed to sunlight, this is an important consideration.

However, both diapers use

some parts made of non-degradable materials—notably the adhesive tabs. Also, many plastics experts question whether Ecostar™ is truly biodegradable, or whether it just disintegrates, leaving its molecules intact. Even so, most believe this is a significant improvement over conventional disposables and a welcome intermediate step.

Underneath the biodegradable plastic outer shell, both diapers use a filler made of wood pulp. Currently, TenderCare uses bleached wood pulp, while Nappies just switched to an unbleached filler.

Differences surface on the layers closer to the baby's skin. TenderCare tops the wood pulp with a layer of tissue and then a biodegradable rayon top sheet.

Nappies include an absorbent acrylic gelling agent in the wood pulp, finishing with a sheet of nonwoven plastic.

At present, this innermost lining is not biodegradable.

Unlike Nappies and conventional disposables, TenderCare doesn't use the acrylic gelling agent.

Both diaper companies are quick to admit that biodegradable plastics can't solve the solid waste problem by themselves.

So what's a confused parent to do? If you're using cloth for ecological reasons, that's probably still the most environmentally benign way to go—particularly if you wash them in a biodegradable detergent.

But if you've been feeling guilty with every trip to the landfill, consider switching either to chemical-free TenderCares or absorbent, inexpensive Nappies. It won't save the world, but it will increase the life of your landfill.

## Ordering information:

**Nappies:** Primarily distributed in New England, Nappies are

available at all Shaw Markets, all Bradlee's, most Star Markets, Ann & Hope, and at some Ames, Big Y and Stop & Shops.

If you live in another part of the country, you can order them at a higher price through the Seventh Generation mail order catalog, 10 Farrell St., So. Burlington, VT 05403, 802-862-2999.

**TenderCares:** Available at a number of large health food stores, for example Bread & Circus. For more information, call 800-344-6379.

## The cloth option

Cloth diapers have experienced a resurgence as parents become more aware of waste disposal issues.

Newer approaches such as combining cloth diapers with woolen diaper covers have made cloth diapers easier for many parents.

And in many parts of the country, professional diaper services can take on the laundry chores for less than the cost of using disposables.

However, cloth does require more attention. Babies using cloth may have to be changed very frequently to avoid diaper rash—even every hour.

And diaper service may not be an option for all parents, because some babies are allergic to the strong chemicals they use in cleaning.

The most ecological solution is to use cloth and do your own laundry with a gently but effective biodegradable detergent.

If cloth isn't feasible for you, biodegradable diapers are a big step in the right direction, until a better solution is developed.

Shel Horowitz is Director of Accurate Writing & More, a Northampton, Mass. consulting firm, and is also a widely published freelance writer. He and his partner coparent a 19 month old daughter who uses biodegradable disposable diapers.



# Try a little honesty

By Candace Schap

Honesty. Webster's defines it as "the quality of being truthful."

While that may seem like no great revelation, the definition's very simplicity is what we should take to heart. Sometimes the plain, simple truth can move the mountains that all our complaining and manipulating couldn't budge. Whether you have one child or four, the little ones in your life probably present you with more mountains than you've faced through all the years preceding their arrival.

When we parents begin our efforts at mountain-moving, we often dive in with no clear plan of attack. Then we blunder around for awhile, as the stress and frustration build to dangerous levels.

While we cannot ever hope to precisely plot the road ahead with our children, we can spend some time equipping ourselves with the tools to do the job properly.

The most useful tool we have also turns out to be the simplest—good old-fashioned honesty.

## Being honest with ourselves

The most insidious form of dishonesty we practice is usually on ourselves. We don't even know we're doing it most of the time.

We read articles warning us about overextending ourselves and think, "Thank goodness I don't try to be Supermom."

The truth is, in some form or another, that is exactly what we are trying to be. The definition of Supermom doesn't have to be the woman who works at a career and tries to do it all at home, too. When you berate yourself because you can't handle your

four small children and do your shopping at the same time, you are very much falling into the Supermom syndrome.

Any woman or man who drives to meet some lofty, self-imposed expectations fits the definition, so a very important starting point is to be honest with yourself. What are you really capable of handling, and what are you demanding from yourself only because you think that is what a "good" parent would do? Once you admit your weaknesses and stop trying to pretend they don't exist, you can begin to lower the stress they cause by dealing with them effectively.

For example, I finally admitted to myself that I couldn't handle all four kids in public together, so now I never even attempt it. At first it was a blow to my image of what a "good" mom should be.

But now it's a relief for me, because I know it's one less stress point I will have to face.

When we are honest with ourselves, we not only remove stress, we also relieve ourselves of some of the guilt that seems to be a prerequisite of parenthood.

Every summer I vowed to structure our days, to have planned activities and projects for the kids so their days wouldn't be filled with aimless play.

In other words, I was going to be the most organized mother on the block, my kids and I were going to enjoy each other enormously.

For the next two summers I failed miserably.

I hated structured days only a little less than my kids did, and after one or two projects they lost interest.

My agenda fell apart and I spent the rest of the summer feeling guilty that I couldn't carry out my "simple" plan. Being honest with myself meant admitting that organizational skills are not one of my strong points. I approached the next summer

with an entirely different focus, one that incorporated some of my strengths such as a love for hiking and for reading. So my two older girls learned a new pastime and visited the library once in a while, and I accepted the fact that I was doing my best for them while also trying to take care of two toddler boys.

Do you sometimes resent your kids for the time they've taken away from you, for the hobbies and interests you've had to put to the side? Be honest about those feelings.

If you continue to deny that such "bad" feelings can exist in a "good" parent, you will never give yourself the chance to find creative ways to deal with them.

## Being honest with the family

Now that you have worked out just what you can and cannot handle, what your limits are and what you are physically capable of doing, let the family in on it.

While my husband realized I was frustrated and full of stress, he had only a vague idea of how he could be helpful. Once I had made things clear enough in my mind that I was able to give him a better picture of things, he was able to come up with specific ways he could pitch in.

For example, making sure I didn't ever get stuck with all four kids on shopping day. Or doing the dishes while I took care of the nightly bath marathon. Or a real biggie, looking the other way when the house wasn't as clean as his mom used to keep hers.

The real trick is not to allow the family to push you back into old patterns. Children can't be expected to understand your needs, but they can be trained to respect them. Don't ever let the family make you feel guilty for carving out space for yourself.

## Being honest with friends

Honesty with your friends  
Continued on next page...



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benefits not only you, but them as well.

There were several reasons I kept a false front around my friends. The first was pride. I just could not bring myself to admit that this job I had taken on was sometimes more than I could handle.

Other reasons were that I didn't want to seem like a whiner, or worse, to sound like I didn't like my kids. When the truth finally did start slipping out in my conversations, I discovered two amazing things.

The first was that my friends, rather than thinking of me as a failure, saw me as a comrade in need. They were eager to help once they were aware of that need.

Friends can't help if they're not even aware of your need. And friends do want to help. You need to give them the chance.

The other discovery I made was even more touching. Once I began to open up, I could not believe the number of women who loosed their own floodgates. It was such a relief to them to find out they were not alone, that their feelings of guilt, failure and resentment were not "abnormal."

One acquaintance said to me, "I was having so much trouble coping with only two kids, and you looked like you were breezing through. I couldn't understand what was wrong with me." It actually made young moms feel better to hear me say I was planning to cut my throat, or maybe sell a couple of kids to the gypsies. Even better is the collective sigh of relief that goes around a room when just one woman admits she's lost control of the mess in her house.

While admitting I wasn't a pillar of motherhood did rob me of some of my pride, the end result was relationships that were richer and much more open. We were

no longer afraid to share our weaknesses with each other.

### Being honest with the community

In one week's time, I was asked to teach a Sunday school class, collect on my block for the heart fund, and be a chaperone for a school field trip.

At one time in my life I would have said yes to all three and thrived on the hard work and involvement. Today if I said yes to any one of them, my stress level would pass the danger point.



To everything there is a season. I am totally convinced that when you have preschoolers in your house, it is not the season for active community involvement. "Just say no" is the best piece of advice you could follow.

When you first begin to say no, there will definitely be tugs of guilt, especially if you've been actively involved in a special cause or organization. It does get easier with time, and there are ways to stay involved without committing time you don't have.

For example, at my church I had become a jack-of-all-trades, teaching Sunday school, planning the programs for the women's group, singing in the choir, and helping out anywhere else I was asked. It was a small church, and I feared if I said no

there would be no one to do the job.

Meanwhile, I spent more time complaining about the church and less time enjoying it. When they asked me to be a deaconess right after the birth of my third baby, I finally put my foot down. Gradually I tapered off on all my activities until, by the birth of my fourth child, my commitments were limited to helping in the children's church every few weeks.

Needless to say, they found people to fill my other jobs, and I was able to look at church as a place of worship again instead of resenting it.

Don't allow yourself to feel guilty. There will be time later for you to give to others. Right now you need to focus on you, your spouse and the children.

While you don't want to "drop out" of life, making some space for your family and your own mental health should be your priority now. It's only for a couple of years until you get that last baby packed off to kindergarten.

We all need goals to work toward—they supply the motivating force to our lives. The problems arise when the goals we set are unrealistic or impossible to reach.

I may want to have a house that could be photographed for House Beautiful, but a much more realistic and honest goal for me is to keep the house clean enough that I won't be embarrassed when the meter-reader shows up.

Honesty removes a lot of the stress we've placed on ourselves. Once we've put it to work for us, we are better equipped to deal with all the other stress that our kids are dishing out every day.

Candace Schap is a freelance writer from Worcester, Massachusetts, where she lives with her husband and four children.



# The Back Page

## Measles immunization update

Immunizations are a vital part of your child's health care. It is important to schedule them at the times and intervals recommended by your pediatrician.

These recommendations change, however, as new information on the effectiveness of the various vaccines becomes available.

Such is the case with the measles vaccine (old-fashioned measles or rubeola). Until recently it was thought that only one dose was necessary and that it should be given at 15 months of age.

It has now been determined, however, that in a small number of cases the protection from the vaccine begins to decrease as the child approaches or nears the end of adolescence.

This has resulted in outbreaks of this disease, not only in these age groups but also in others where there were children who were not immunized.

For this reason the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recently recommended that a booster dose be given at about the time a child enters middle school (grades 6 or 7) or college. It also advised reimmunization of young adults in college or those involved in the health professions.

Although these are the booster ages suggested by the AAP, others ages (such as 5) may be recommended by other experts and may be used at the discretion of the individual pediatrician.

The Mumps, Measles, and Rubella (MMR) is the vaccine of choice since it will at the same time provide additional protection against mumps and rubella. It is a little more expensive but is a good investment.

The question of possible reactions to this booster has been raised. As with all vaccines, this is a possibility but is unlikely to occur. The chances for contracting the diseases and experiencing their severe, sometimes life-threatening complications are much greater than

those for having a significant or serious reaction to the vaccine.

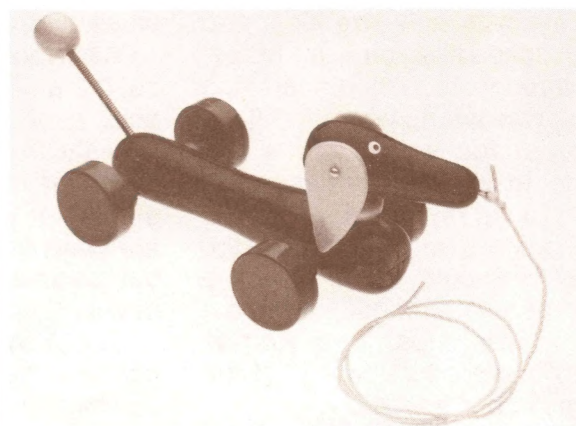
This will not be the last change in immunization practices. New vaccines, such as one for chicken pox, are on the way. The best way to keep your child's protection up to date is to have regular check ups and to follow your pediatrician's advice.

## Notice of recall

BRIO Scanditoy Corporation, in cooperation with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, has determined that some of the Dachsie (dachshund wooden pull toy, see illustration below) have broken and released small pieces.

These small pieces could pose a potential choking or swallowing hazard to young children.

To date no injuries have been reported.



Consumers who purchased this item from **Growing Child** are requested to return it for a full refund.



# Research Briefs

Excerpts from child development research

## Children's views on crossing streets aren't logical

Why do so many young accident victims carefully look to the left and to the right—and then dash straight into an oncoming car?

Safety experts know something parents and teachers don't. Children depend on magic to protect them from danger, rather than their senses and common sense.

The familiar "look left, look right, look left again before you cross the road" is just a "charm" to young children, says Preston Howard of the Florida Department of Education. "Kids use it as if it were a magical incantation that protects them."

The young also "put a lot of faith in crosswalks, but to them it's an abracadabra-type thing. They think that the crosswalk magically protects them," Howard told a New York Times forum on the subject.

"Adults should not rely on logical explanations to make a young child obey safety rules," Dr. Lewis R. Lipsitt, director of the Brown University Child Study Center, cautions.

He believes that a better tactic with toddlers is a simple, absolute prohibition such as "No. You may not do that."

Instead of allowing kindergartners and first-graders to turn the "left, right, left" street-crossing rule into a rhythmic, head-nodding exercise signifying nothings, have the child identify something up on the road to the left, safety specialist Andrew Halper of the University of Minnesota School of Public Health suggests. "That way they're not just nodding their heads in time to the required ritual. They're focusing."

But surely kids understand the purpose of stop-lights?

Not necessarily, says Preston Howard. He brings up the study conducted by the Federal Highway Administration, which found that 31 percent of children waiting at a traffic light were unable to tell the researcher when it was safe to cross the street.

"This was a strikingly high proportion," he points out, "since each child had a 50/50 change of being right simply by guessing."

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## TV's effects begin early

Newborns who were regularly exposed to the theme music from mom's or sitter's favorite soap opera when they were in utero not only recognize the tune but are calmed by it, an Irish psychologist reports.

Seven babies whose mothers had viewed a popular soap daily during their pregnancies now seem to associate the show's theme song with "quiet time."

Two of them cease wailing as soon as the tune is played.

Six of the seven adopt a "quiet alert" state, one that mimics television-watching, when the familiar music starts.

Queens University, Belfast, researcher Peter Hepper reports that babies whose mothers hadn't been exposed to the music couldn't care less when the music begins. Only two of the eight showed any awareness that there was music in the air.

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### The American Baby TV Show









On CBN Cable Network

Mondays	12:30 PM ET	9:30 AM PT
Fridays	12:30 PM ET	9:30 AM PT

*These brief reports are presented to add to readers' general knowledge of research being done in the child development field. Inclusion of an item does not imply that Growing Child recommends or endorses a particular practice, theory, or finding.*



# Fun things to do in March

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						
4 Take a car ride and talk about the things you see.	5 Pretend Play: Be an animal.	6 What color is Mom's hair? What color is Dad's?	7 Do you have a special relative to whom you could send a picture? 	1 Today is Thursday. What is tomorrow?	2 Make muffins and put real fruit inside. 	3 Make something following a recipe. This requires following directions.
11 Make a cape to wear and be a superhero.	12 Close your eyes and listen to the sounds in the kitchen.	13 Did you have a good day today?	14 Count three things: three apples, three toys, three books.	8 Wear stripes today. What direction are they in?	9 Make up a silly story: "I saw an elephant in the store today and ..."	10 Can you help Mom and Dad with the housework?
18 How many ways can you play with used wrapping paper?	19 Read a new story. 	20 Buy a wind sock, hang it outside and watch what happens!	15 Stack some blocks. 	16 Look through catalogs.	17 St. Patrick's Day. Wear something green. 	24 How many ways can you make someone smile?
25 Do you have a big box or place to keep your toys?	26 Close your eyes and listen to the sounds in the bathroom.	27 Make silly faces at each other.	21 First day of Spring! What does this mean? 	22 Sing "Where is Thumbkin?" or your favorite fingerplay.	23 Take a trip to see Mom or Dad at work.	31 Donate non-perishable food to a community food bank.
			28 Talk about what you did today.	29 Wiggle toes. 	30 Talk about the TV shows you watch. 